

Yorta Yorta language

Yorta Yorta (Yotayota) is a dialect cluster, or perhaps a group of closely related languages, spoken by the Yorta Yorta people, Indigenous Australians from the junction of the Goulburn and Murray Rivers in present-day northeast Victoria. Dixon considers it an isolate.

Yorta Yorta clans include the Bangerang, Kailtheban, Wollithiga, Moira, Penrith, Ulupna, Kwat Kwat and Nguaria-iiliam-wurrung.^[5] The name is also spelled *Jotijota*, *Jodajoda*, *Joti-jota*, *Yodayod*, *Yoda-Yoda*, *Yoorta*, *Yota*, *Yoti Yoti*, *Yotta-Yotta*, *Youtha*; other names are *Arramouro*, *Boonegatha*, *Echuca*, *Gunbowerooranditchgoole*, *Gunbowers*, *Kwart Kwart*, *Unungun*, *Wol-lithiga ~ Woollathura*.

The Yaliba Yaliba language of the Pikkolaatpan tribe is about 70% similar to the dialect of the Bangerang, suggesting they may be closely related languages rather than dialects.

Although the language is considered dormant due to contact with Europeans and forcible dislocation to missions, the Yorta Yorta had maintained many words. There have been strong moves of late to revive the language.

Two Yorta Yorta women, Lois Peeler and Sharon Atkinson, together with Dr Heather Bowe from Monash University, worked for several years to compile a comprehensive record of research material, entitled *Yorta Yorta Language Heritage*. This work provided a summary of existing written records, with reference to the spoken resources, and included introductory lessons in Yorta Yorta, together with English to Yorta Yorta and Yorta Yorta to English dictionaries.

Yorta Yorta	
	Yotayota
	Murray–Goulburn
Region	Victoria, Australia
Ethnicity	Yorta Yorta (Pangerang, Kwatkwat)
Extinct	by 1960 ^[1]
Revival	62 self-identified speakers (2016 census) ^[2]
Language family	Pama–Nyungan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yotayotic ▪ Yorta Yorta
Dialects	Yaliba-Yaliba
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	xyy
Glottolog	yort1237 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/yort1237) ^[3]
AIATSIS ^[4]	D2 (https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/language/D2)

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Phonology

Consonants

	<u>Labial</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Retroflex</u>	<u>Velar</u>
Stop	b	ɖ	d	t̪	(ɖ)	g
Nasal	m	ɳ	n	ɳ	(ɳ)	ɳ
Lateral			l	(ʎ)	(l̪)	
Rhotic			r̪~r		(r̪)	
Approximant	w			j		

A palatal lateral or the following retroflex consonants could have potentially been recorded. An alveolar rhotic sound could have been a trill or a flap.^[1]

Vowels

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
Close	i		u
Mid	e		o
Open		a	

Music



Indigenous pop, R&B, and soul singer Jessica Mauboy performs "Ngarra Burra Ferra" at the 2013 Mbantua Festival in Alice Springs, Northern Territory with Aboriginal Australian students from Yipirinya State Primary School, of which Mauboy is the official ambassador.

The track "Ngarra Burra Ferra" sung by indigenous artist Jessica Mauboy from the 2012 hit film The Sapphires is a song based on the traditional Aboriginal hymn "Bura Fera."^[6] The song is in the Yorta Yorta language and speaks of the Lord God's help in decimating a Pharaoh's armies. The chorus, *Ngara burra ferra yumini yala yala*, translates into English as "The Lord God drowned all Pharaoh's armies, hallelujah!" These lyrics are based on an ancient song in Jewish tradition known as the "Song of the Sea" or "Miriam's Song", as it was composed and sung by Miriam, older sister of the prophet Moses. It can be found in Exodus 15, especially verse 4, "Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea." Aboriginal communities of Victoria and southern New South Wales may be the only people in the world who still sing the piece (in Yorta Yorta).^[6]

References

1. Bowe, Morey, Heather, Stephen (1999). *The Yorta Yorta (Bangerang) language of the Murray Goulburn : including Yabula Yabula*. Pacific Linguistics. pp. 41–43.
2. "Census 2016, Language spoken at home by Sex (SA2+)" (http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ABS_C16_T09_SA). *stat.data.abs.gov.au*. ABS. Retrieved 2017-10-30.
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Yorta Yorta" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/yort1237>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. D2 (<https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/language/D2>) Yorta Yorta at the Australian Indigenous Languages Database, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Studies

5. Yorta Yorta Co-operative Management Agreement (<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/nrenlwm.nsf/LinkView/7FA349BEAE0F5A3FCA256E8D00210309A4AD52AC7C448F1A4A256DEA0024ED>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20060913195148/http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/nrenlwm.nsf/LinkView/7FA349BEAE0F5A3FCA256E8D00210309A4AD52AC7C448F1A4A256DEA0024ED>) September 13, 2006, at the [Wayback Machine](#)
6. "The lyrics to Bura Fera" (<http://towalkwithyou.com/the-lyrics-to-bura-fera/>).
towalkwithyou.com. 13 September 2013. Retrieved 26 April 2014.

External links

- <https://web.archive.org/web/20061012231600/http://www.fatsil.org:80/LOTM/oct99.htm>
- Monash University Library (<http://www.lib.monash.edu/collections/monash-authors/pre2000/0858835134.html>)
- Bibliography of Bangerang language and people resources (http://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/collections/language_bibs/bangerang_kwat_kwat_waveroo.pdf), at the [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](#)

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